

# Developing and Sustaining Child Abuse Prevention Programs in Tough Times

This series contains excerpts from an online toolkit developed by the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information in partnership with the Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and other national child abuse prevention organizations.

## PREVENTION FACT SHEETS IN THIS SERIES

Collaborating With Your Community  
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Evaluating Your Prevention Program  
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For more information see the Prevention Initiative website:  
<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/topics/prevention>

# Collaborating With Your Community

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HUMAN SERVICES AGENCIES, SCHOOLS, faith-based groups, health care facilities, businesses, and other agencies and organizations all have a stake in helping to prevent child abuse and neglect. Working in isolation, these groups often struggle to find the resources to make an impact on the lives of children and families. Working together, they can combine resources to prevent physical and emotional harm to children, build strong families, and help communities thrive.

Federal programs increasingly require community programs to collaborate in serving children and families. This practice can improve service delivery by eliminating duplication of programs for children and families and filling in gaps where services are needed. Overall, community collaboration for the prevention of child abuse and neglect provides many benefits, such as:

- Enabling prevention programs to address the strengths and needs of individual families by creating a wider array of services.
- Linking child abuse prevention efforts to broader community initiatives and priorities.
- Assisting agencies and organizations in gaining access to community leaders, target audiences, and other resources.
- Helping communities shape the strategies and network of services based on their own resources, needs, and culture.
- Providing an opportunity for agencies and organizations to share in the costs of preventing child abuse and neglect by blending funding resources.

All child abuse prevention collaborations seek to strengthen and support families and decrease harm to children; however, they may take many different forms. Learning about a variety of approaches can guide professionals in choosing the right one for their community.



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## Forming a Collaboration

The first question for professionals to consider before forming a collaboration is whether their organization is reaching its goals in the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Do other local agencies or organizations share similar goals? Might a collaborative effort help to expand efforts or provide additional access to community leaders, funding sources, or other critical resources? Does the community have a prevention collaborative that involves family stakeholders, private physicians, hospital and school personnel, law enforcement, child care staff, social services department representatives, clergy, representatives of elected officials, and representatives from the business community? If not, it may be time to identify a group of partners and lay out a mission and vision for enhancing child protection.

Questions to consider in establishing a collaboration:

- What do you hope to accomplish by collaborating?
- What is your mission and vision?
- What are some local funding sources?
- How will you evaluate your collaboration?
- What organizational structure best suits your collaboration's needs?

An important step in building a community collaboration is deciding which agencies and organizations to include.

Professionals should look beyond the traditional participants, including agencies and organizations that do not directly serve

children and families. These organizations can play important roles in collaborative efforts by galvanizing additional support in the community. Professionals also should solicit the involvement of parents, other concerned community members, and partners that reflect the racial, ethnic, and cultural makeup of the community. This will help bring to the table a wide range of experiences, ideas, and perspectives.

Potential partners in child abuse and neglect prevention include:

- Arts and humanities organizations
- Community businesses
- Parents and parenting groups
- Concerned community members
- Elected officials
- Health agencies (including physical health, mental health, and substance abuse agencies)
- Disability agencies
- Child care organizations
- Early childhood organizations
- Healthy marriage and fatherhood programs
- Juvenile or family court judges
- Law enforcement
- Local government and public agencies
- Members of the faith community
- Media
- Physicians' groups
- Schools
- Social service agencies

Balancing the needs and interests of the various groups who participate can be challenging, but even a group of very diverse people can work together on shared goals with patience and effort.

### Example

*Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention*  
[www.friends.nrc.org](http://www.friends.nrc.org)

The Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) program, authorized by Title II of CAPTA, provides funding to a Lead Agency designated by the Governor in every State to support community-based and prevention-focused programs and activities that are based on State and community interagency partnerships and implemented through an interdisciplinary, collaborative, public-private structure that includes parents as full partners.



## Assessing Community Strengths and Needs

Every community is different. A successful prevention collaboration responds directly to the strengths and needs of the unique community it serves. Considerations about cultural context are especially important for understanding how communities define child abuse and neglect and recognizing what community members identify as priority needs and significant resources. These strengths and needs can be identified through a community assessment—a comprehensive set of data that can be used to set objectives, goals, and long-term plans.

A community assessment may take many different forms depending on the time, staff, and funding of the collaboration.

An assessment may be limited to a compilation of demographic data from census records, results of surveys conducted by others, and responses by partnership members to questions about the community they serve. Assessments may be expanded

to include focus group discussions, town meetings, interviews with stakeholders, and telephone or mailed surveys to partnership members and the community.

For years, researchers focused on a deficit model of community needs assessment in which many financial and human resources were devoted to a community's problems.

An unintended outcome of this approach was that community members became reliant on outside services to meet their needs. Citizens never learned how to use community assets to build their own services and solutions.

Researchers have since learned that successful efforts can be built on a map of a community's assets. This method of asset-based community development is internally focused, building on the problem-solving capabilities of citizens, agencies, and organizations. Rather than bringing in solutions from the outside, solutions are created by enhancing existing strengths.

### Examples

#### *New Jersey Statewide Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Plan*

[www.state.nj.us/humanservices/cap/njcap3.html](http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/cap/njcap3.html)

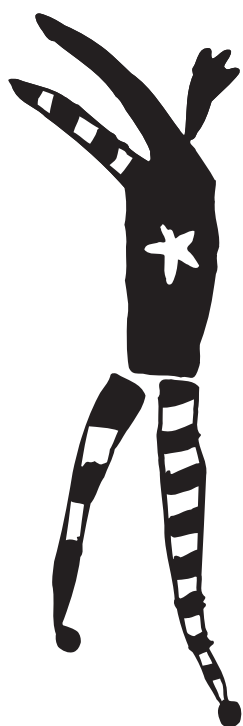
In the spring of 2001, a working group of The New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect was charged with developing a statewide child abuse prevention plan. Based on the premise that many people, agencies, and organizations in a community can contribute to strengthening and supporting families, the prevention plan promotes local planning and implementation, engages the public in understanding child abuse and neglect and what they can do to prevent it, strengthens service providers, develops local connections, and connects local efforts with State planning and support.

#### *Healthy Families Partnership (Hampton, VA)*

[www.hampton.va.us/healthyfamilies/index.html](http://www.hampton.va.us/healthyfamilies/index.html)

Hampton Healthy Families Partnership is a team effort in which city and community agencies have joined together with public and private organizations such as hospitals, restaurants, businesses, and banks to help families become healthy, happy, and self sufficient.

Through home visitation, parenting classes, newsletters, library resource centers, and a variety of other programs, the Partnership works to ensure that every child in Hampton is born healthy and enters school ready to learn. Thanks to its broad community support, the partnership was able to reach 30,000 of the 35,000 children living in Hampton in 2002. Outcomes include a 27 percent reduction in the rate of child abuse and neglect in Hampton between 1992 and 2000.





*Examples and resources in this document are informational only and do not represent an endorsement by the Children's Bureau.*

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**National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information  
National Adoption Information Clearinghouse**



*Gateways to Information: Protecting Children and Strengthening Families*